

Affirmative action in universities

[Education](#), [University](#)



Affirmative action has been praised and pilloried as the answer to racial inequality. First introduced by President Kennedy in 1961, "Affirmative action" was designed as a method of reducing the discrimination that had remained despite the civil rights laws and constitutional guarantees. It was a method that was put in place as a "Temporary Measure to Level the Playing Field" through the offering of the same opportunities to all Americans.

While the "Affirmative Action" plan was intended to have good effects, it resulted in exposing the flaws in the system as "Reverse Racism" began to emerge and the "Bakke" case came about where a white male was rejected two years in a row in favor of admitting other minorities through a quota system.

This "Reverse Racism" and other flaws led to a mounting anger against "Affirmative Action" and soon it became a Zero Sum Game as jobs and opportunities became open to minorities but not to whites. During this period, "Preferential treatment" and "quotas" became expressions of contempt.

There has been a growing difficulty now in appreciating the "Affirmative Action" as even liberals have adopted the stance that affirmative action may even result in injustice as in the case of Wygant in 1986 where black employees kept their jobs while white employees with seniority were laid off.

Recent cases have once again brought "Affirmative Action" into public view as in 2003; the Supreme Court decided that there was a right of affirmative action in higher education.

The relevance of this decision is that it somewhat creates a measure by which affirmative action can be implemented. In the 2003 Michigan Cases, it was stated that “ Affirmative action was intended to promote a “ Compelling State Interest” in diversity in not only a particular aspect of society but on all levels.

It is therefore the goal of this proponent to prove that Affirmative action is indeed needed in Universities all over the United States. There are many good reasons as to why affirmative action should be allowed in Universities and by the end of this discussion it will be duly proven that affirmative action is indeed needed in Universities.

The first reason is based on the ruling of the Supreme Court in the case of the University of Michigan where the doctrine allowing affirmative action was laid down. In this case, there were two (2) cases that were filed against the University of Michigan, one by two students, Jennifer Gratz and Peter Hamacher, who were refused admission into the college and another by Barbara Grutter who was turned down by the law school.

The ruling in this case was that affirmative action in Universities is permitted by law and the United States Constitution. The court reached its decision on the basis of the previous ruling in University of California Regents v. Bakke where it was expressly held that race could be used as a positive factor in determining the admission and hiring practices of Universities.

The Court added, however, that race should not be the sole factor in determining such.

The reason for such a ruling is best expressed by the statement contained in one of the briefs presented in the University of Michigan Case:

“ Because racial diversity in higher education also is necessary to integrate the officer corps and to train and educate white and minority officers, it is essential to ensuring an effective, battle-ready fighting force. This is indisputably a compelling government interest. ‘ It is obvious and unarguable that no governmental interest is more compelling than the security of the Nation.”[1]

The goal of affirmative action therefore is diversity in not only Universities but in all strata of society. This same diversity which was the basis of the Supreme Court in deciding in favor of affirmative action in the University of Michigan is the ultimate goal of affirmative action.

A very integral part of the education process lies in learning to interact with other races and nationalities, especially in the United States which is considered as a melting pot for all cultures and races all over the world. The sad reality is that most Americans are brought up in relative isolation from other races and cultures and only in college does such exposure occur.

This leads to undesirable consequences such as the creation of strong stereotypes and racial biases. The implementation of an affirmative action plan in universities will help students interact with one another and to learn from people of other cultures and races and maybe help them to come to a better understanding and tolerance for other races.

It is this relevance of diversity in the development of one’s education that is the reason why affirmative action must be allowed.

Another reason why affirmative action must be allowed in Universities is because it levels the playing field and allows the minority students a chance to succeed in education and ultimately life.

Statistics show that the minorities have relatively lesser in life than average white Americans. These minorities often come from lower income families that cannot afford to send their children to private schools. The communities that these minorities come from are often crime infested areas.

These students are just as capable intellectually and as hard working as their white counterparts but are often denied admission into good college programs because of their financial and racial backgrounds. Affirmative action levels the playing field and gives those minority students a chance at a better education and a better life.